



State of South Carolina  
Office of The Lieutenant Governor

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**Ombudsman Volunteers Honored at State House Ceremony**  
***National Volunteer Week celebrated April 23 - 29***

(Columbia, S.C.) National Volunteer Week will be celebrated next week in the U.S., and a group of community volunteers from across South Carolina were honored at the S.C. State House on Tuesday (April 18) for their involvement with a new program designed to help residents of the state's nursing homes and other long term care facilities.

Volunteer Ombudsmen from the Upstate, Midlands and Charleston areas were presented with plaques by Lt. Governor André Bauer and state lawmakers representing the awardees' local communities. The awards acknowledge their completion of the training to become certified Volunteer Ombudsmen in South Carolina. The volunteers were also recognized from the floor of both chambers of the General Assembly.

"They have a passion for helping other people," Bauer said of the volunteers. "You are truly doing God's work, and we appreciate you giving your time and effort to this."

Honored in Tuesday's ceremony for completing their training were Don and Carol Groezinger of Gaffney, Lamar Bailes of Walhalla, Janette Gianopoulos of Spartanburg, Joyce Mize of Lexington, Carolyn Briggs of Eastover, Eddie Adair of Mount Pleasant, Beverly Peake of Mt. Pleasant and Don Nottingham of North Charleston. Also recognized were several volunteers who are nearing the completion of their training; including Lucille Severns of Simpsonville, Celia Glenn of Greenville, Jane Duke of Chapin and Richard Brague of Columbia.

"These volunteers help to fill a vital need for SC residents who live in nursing homes or assisted living facilities," said State Long Term Care Ombudsman Dale Watson. "It takes a special person to do this job, the time commitment and effort required to complete the extensive training program are significant."

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The Volunteer Ombudsman program was designed to enhance South Carolina's existing system of full-time Regional Long Term Care Ombudsmen who respond to complaints of substandard care, abuse or neglect in nursing homes and other residential care facilities.

The new Volunteer Ombudsman program will augment that effort by placing trained community volunteers in facilities to visit regularly with residents, participate in resident and family council meetings, and help address minor concerns or problems before they become more serious. The South Carolina Silver Haired Legislature and the AARP were instrumental in working with long term care industry leaders and the Lt. Governor's Office on Aging to get the volunteer program off the ground.

"If your loved one lives in a South Carolina nursing home, it should give you peace of mind to know that a volunteer ombudsman can visit that facility on a weekly basis as they do in 46 other states," said Jane Wiley AARP South Carolina State Director. Up to 60 percent of nursing home residents rarely receive an outside visitor.

Since 1999, the Silver Haired Legislature has urged the creation of a volunteer ombudsman program, said its current speaker, Tom Lloyd. "We want to thank the long term care industry, the advocates for seniors, and all the others who worked together to create this program which will add to the quality of life of nursing home patients."

Program managers hope to continue adding new volunteers and facilities to the ranks of the program. The ultimate goal: to have a regular weekly visitor to act as a liaison between staff and residents in every single long term care facility in the state. Individuals who are interested in volunteering can contact Statewide Program Coordinator Cheryl Stone at the Lt. Governor's Office in Columbia at (803) 734-9900.

National Volunteer Week began in 1974 when President Richard Nixon signed an executive order establishing the week as an annual celebration of volunteering. Since then, every U.S. President has signed a proclamation promoting National Volunteer Week. Additionally, governors, mayors and other elected officials make public statements and sign proclamations in support of National Volunteer Week. The 2006 theme is "Inspire by Example" because it truly reflects the power volunteers have to inspire the people they help, as well as, to inspire others to serve. For more information, visit the Points of Light Foundation web site at [www.pointsoflight.org](http://www.pointsoflight.org).

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